

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02
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FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6360
INFO AMEMBASSY BELIZE IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CARACAS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN IMMEDIATE
USINT HAVANA IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS GEORGETOWN 0788

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGSC PBOR, PDEV, BH, GT, GY
SUBJECT: BELIZE PREMIER PRICE'S REMARKS:PRECISE QUOTATION

REF: GEORGETOWN 0778

1. THE EXACT QUOTATION OF BELIZEAN PREMIER GEORGE PRICE'S PRESS
CONFERENCE COMMENTS CONCERNING SECRETARY VANCE'S ADVICE ON THE
CESSION

OF TERRITORY TO GUATEMALA WAS: QUOTE. REGARDING THE
UNITED STATES, WHEN SECRETARY VANCE SPOKE TO ME IN NOVEMBER,
I THEN TOLD HIM THE OBJECTIONS TO LAND CESSION AND HE SAID
TO ME: 'YOU BETTER GO AND CONSIDER IT, IT'S THE BEST
SOLUTION YOU CAN EVER GET.' UNQUOTE.

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2. IN HIS PRESS CONFERENCE, PRICE OUTLINED THE REASONS WHY
HIS GOVERNMENT WAS OPPOSED TO LAND CESSION AS THE PRICE OF
INDEPENDENCE AND SAID HIS GOVERNMENT HAD DECIDED TO SEEK
SECURITY GUARANTEES AFTER INDEPENDENCE, AS PROPOSED BY
THE COMMONWEALTH CARIBBEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING IN
BELIZE TWO WEEKS AGO. GUYANA, BARBADOS, JAMAICA AND

ANOTHER LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRY--WHICH COULD NOT YET BE NAMED--HAD AGREED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SECURITY ARRANGEMENT. (NOTE: REPORTEDLY THE UNNAMED COUNTRY IS VENEZUELA.) CANADA'S PRIME MINISTER, WHO PRICE DESCRIBED AS "A GREAT FRIEND OF BELIZE" HAD BEEN ASKED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS, BUT HAD NOT RESPONDED YET. PRICE ENVISIONED THAT THE PARTICIPATING GOVERNMENTS WOULD MAKE A DECLARATION THAT THEY WOULD DEFEND BELIZE IF IT WERE ATTACKED BY GUATEMALA. THE PARTICIPANTS WOULD MAINTAIN A "PRESENCE" IN BELIZE.

3. PRICE STATED HE HAD RULED OUT THE POSSIBILITY OF ASKING FOR CUBAN MILITARY ASSISTANCE BECAUSE OF THE LIKELY RESPONSE THAT WOULD BE FORTHCOMING FROM THE U.S. HE NOTED THAT THE US "WAS THE MOST POWERFUL COUNTRY" AND IF CUBA WERE TO GIVE BELIZE "PHYSICAL SUPPORT," AN "UNNECESSARY PROBLEM WOULD BE CREATED."

4. DURING THE QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD, PRICE, IN COMMENTING FURTHER ON THE U.S. ATTITUDE, SAID THAT THE UNITED STATES WOULD INCLINE TO UPHOLD THE GUATEMALAN SIDE OF THE DISPUTE DUE TO THE SIGNIFICANT INVESTMENT THAT THE U.S. HAS IN GUATEMALA AND THE EXISTENCE OF A LOBBY IN CONGRESS. HOWEVER, BAWIZE, AS A PREDOMINANTLY BLACK COUNTRY, WAS APPEALING TO THE U.S. ON THE BASIS OF HUMAN RIGHTS. IN THIS CONNECTION IT WAS COMMUNICAT-
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ING WITH THE CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS AND AMBASSADOR ANDREW YOUNG.

5. PLAYING ON GUYANESE SENSITIVITIES, PRICE ASSERTED THAT IF THE GUATEMALAN TERRITORIAL CLAIM WERE HONORED, IT MIGHT ESTABLISH AN ADVERSE PRECEDENT ON OTHER TERRITORIAL DISPUTES.

6. PRICE LEFT GUYANA MARCH 10 FOR VENEZUELA TO MEET WITH PRESIDENT CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ. PRIOR TO HIS DEPARTURE, HE SAID THAT HE HOPED TO MEET WITH PRIME MINISTER ERIC WILLIAMS IN TRINIDAD NEXT WEEK.

7 COMMENT: GUYANESE LEADERS REMAIN SOLIDLY BEHIND PRICE'S POSITION OF NOT CEDING TERRITORY. THE PARLIAMENT PASSED, UNANIMOUSLY, A RESOLUTION OF SOLIDARITY SUPPORTING INDEPENDENCE FOR BELIZE WITHIN ITS PRESENT BOUNDARIES.
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